

## **Notes of the Annual Parish Meeting, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2026, 18:00,**

### **HMP Stocken Visitor Centre**

#### **1. Chairman's welcome report and public forum**

The Chair (Councillor Hawkes) welcomed twelve members of the public to the meeting and expressed his thanks to the Governor Daw of HMP Stocken for allowing residents to come together at the Visitor Centre for the 2026 Annual Parish Meeting. The Chair signed the notes of the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting and provided an update on the work of Stretton Parish Council over the preceding year (see Annex A), inviting questions, comments or ideas on how residents can contribute to Stretton.

Responding to a question from a member of the public concerning the defibrillator at Stretton Wood Estate, the Chair clarified that talks were ongoing with HMP Stocken to potentially install the defibrillator on the wall of the HMP Stocken Dog Training Centre, close to the Stretton Wood Estate.

One member of the public informed that a complaint had been submitted to Stretton Parish Council (SPC) regarding the lack of access to St Nicholas Church for prayer, requesting SPC look into the issue of reasonable access to the Church for all parishioners. The Chair accepted the resident's offer to read out their complaint (see Annex B with names redacted).

Another member of the public asked that energies of the Council remain properly focussed on Council responsibilities and not broadened into areas that were not in its remit, further requesting that the Council continue to act on behalf of all parishioners, and not become sidetracked on matters outside its area of expertise or authority.

Another member of the public asked whether the Council was planning a community event rather than just dealing with admin and solving problems – something more positive to bring the community together; supporting the idea, one Stretton resident noted the importance of such a community event given the demographic changes in Stretton's population. Another member of the public also supported the idea of a community event, noting the Hub already catered for a few order residents who were members, and there was certainly room for an event for the whole community to enjoy. The Chair agreed to take this suggestion back to the Council for consideration, noting that community funds should be used for the benefit of all the community, rather than for a non-accountable, non-transparent private group.

#### **2. Ward Councillor Begy's address**

Ward Councillor provided an update on the several topics on the RCC and local agenda over the past year, which included:

- Local Government Reform;
- The Rutland Local Plan;

- Application to develop Woolfox;
- The proposed Kilnside Energy Park Solar Farm;
- Leadership and Cabinet changes at RCC;
- The Food Waste roll-out across Rutland;
- Plans for Local Quarry development;
- Ongoing work to reduce the Stocken Hall Road speed limit;
- Securing funds for the Stretton/Greetham Cycle path.

### **3. Police Update**

Prior to the meeting, Beat Officer PC Holly Bland informed that unfortunately she could not attend the Annual Parish Meeting, due to a clash with her attendance in Court.

### **4. Update from the Hub Chair**

Ms Storrie provided comments in advance of the meeting, which the Chair read out (details at Annex C).

### **5. Update from the Church Warden**

Mr Pattison provided comments in advance of the meeting which the Chair read out. The Chair informed that the Reverend Anthony Oram was also invited to the meeting but declined (details at Annex D). The Chair invited questions / comments for the Church.

One member of the public queried why the memorial to PTE Moreton and PTE Peacock was simply a piece of paper in wooden frame and not something more appropriate.

### **6. Update from HMP Stocken Governor**

Due to a late change, Governor Daw sent apologies for not attending the meeting, due to a personal reason.

### **7. Update from Mr Saunders and Miss Scott, (taking on the Lease for The Jackson Stops).**

Mr Saunders and Miss Scott were introduced; Mr Saunders informed they had taken on the lease of the pub and hoped to reopen The Jackson Stops in early June, when they'd be welcoming everyone in as a traditional pub.

Several members of the public welcomed the news and expressed their enthusiasm for the reopening.

### **8. Final Questions**

A member of the public thanked Stretton Parish Council for the work to install the new Speed Indicator Device (SID) on Stocken Hall Road near Stretton Wood Estate. The Chair confirmed this was the result of a joint effort from the Parish Council and Ward Councillor Begy working with RCC Highways. However there remained further work to do, as the SID at the northern edge of Stretton Wood Estate on Stocken Hall Road had been removed, even though it was still working.

One local resident confirmed that the SID was required to slow-down traffic exiting the prison, and speeds had noticeably increased since the SID's removal.

The Chair thanked the member of the public for their comments and contributions, and in closing the meeting at 19:00, invited all to take refreshments.

J Stokes  
Acting Clerk  
Stretton Parish Council

## **ANNEX A**

### **Chairman's Report for 2025–2026**

Good evening, everybody, and thank you all for coming along to Stretton's 2026 Annual Parish Meeting.

For those of you who don't know me I am Cllr Kevin Hawkes the current Chairman of SPC.

First, I want to express our sincere gratitude to the Governor and staff at HMP Stocken. For their generosity in providing this Visitor Centre, free of charge, as our venue this evening.

#### **Looking back – a year of progress**

This time last year, Stretton Parish Council was in a difficult place. We had seen a high turnover of councillors and clerks, and the new Council had inherited several long-standing issues that still needed sorting out. It was an unsettled time, and there was even a question from a parishioner about whether the Council should even continue.

A year on, our position is much stronger. The current Council is stable, positive and working well together. Your three councillors are fully committed to serving every member of this community with openness, integrity and a focus on practical results. That stability has allowed us to start delivering real value for residents.

#### **Financial discipline and real savings**

One of the clearest changes over the past year has been in the council's financial discipline.

- Last year, your councillors were able to provide a 36.5% reduction in the Parish Precept. And this year we have managed to go further still, agreeing to proceed with an additional 32.4% reduction. Which is a very significant saving for residents at a time when many other costs are rising.
- To achieve this, we have reduced our digital overheads. By moving our website hosting and support to AJ Computing, we now pay in the region of £100 per year, instead of almost £700 that was being spent in the previous accounts.
- We have also been careful about election costs. By formally notifying Rutland County Council that we do not require poll cards to be printed

and delivered for parish elections, we have avoided an estimated £696.22 of unnecessary spending, while still ensuring that residents will be clearly informed if an election is called.

Alongside these savings, our Annual Governance and Accountability Return – the AGAR – was again highly successful. This audit process confirms that the Council’s policies, procedures and finances are being managed lawfully, efficiently and in line with good practice. That might sound a bit dry, but it matters: not least because it is your assurance that the money you entrust to the council is being handled properly.

### **Strengthening partnerships – especially with HMP Stocken**

I’m happy to say that our relationship with HMP Stocken has developed into a very constructive partnership, and it is right to recognise that publicly.

- Following a very successful meeting, I’m delighted to report that the Governor agreed to part-fund the Parish’s street lighting costs and we have already received a reimbursement of £323.36 for the lighting on the approach to the prison for 2025-2026.
- Following a swift intervention during the meeting from Cllr Allan the Governor further agreed to partially finance a new litter bin for the community near to Stretton Wood Estate, helping us to tackle roadside waste in a practical way.
- More broadly, we now have a regular and open dialogue with HMP Stocken about issues that affect them and us – speeding on Stocken Hall Road, roadside litter, street lighting and the strain on our sewerage infrastructure. That joint working is exactly what is needed for a small parish facing large institutional neighbours.

We will continue to build on this relationship in the year ahead, because when we approach problems together, we make more progress than when we work in isolation.

### **Community, environment and safety**

The Council has also continued to focus on the safety and character of the Parish.

- The defibrillator in the telephone box in the village is “rescue ready”, checked weekly and maintained so that, if the worst happens, lifesaving equipment is there and working. And, after further conversations with the

Governors team we are very close to having the second defibrillator re-homed. We have grown our team of volunteer defibrillator guardians to six, and we have held two successful training sessions in the past year so that more people in the village feel confident when using the equipment, should the need arise.

- We are also very grateful to all our community litter pickers, who give their time to keep Stretton looking pristine and cared-for. Their efforts support the work we are doing with National Highways, Rutland County Council and others to address ongoing problems like roadside rubbish and overgrown verges.
- On planning, the Council has continued to respond actively and robustly where proposals threaten the setting or safety of the Village. This has included objecting to a proposal for inappropriate illuminated signage at the Ram Jam services and engaging with wider schemes such as the Kilnside Energy Park solar farm proposal and new Woolfox scheme.

These are all examples of the how the Council doing its job: looking at the detail, making formal representations where necessary, and standing up for the Parish.

### **The bigger picture – planning, quarries and development pressure**

At the same time, there are broader threats and pressures that we must keep firmly on the radar.

- The Parish sits in the middle of an area facing significant development interests – from potential housing and lodges at Woolfox, to quarrying proposals, to further growth at existing sites. These schemes will undoubtedly increase traffic, HGV movements and noise, and put extra pressure on our already stretched infrastructure.
- We will continue to work closely with neighboring parishes, our Ward Councillor Nick Begy, and our MP Alicia Kearns to ensure that Stretton's voice is heard clearly whenever these proposals come forward.
- A central part of this is putting our views forward not just on the developments themselves, but on the supporting infrastructure: roads and lanes that were never designed for modern-day volumes of HGV traffic, safe access for walkers and cyclists, and a sewerage system that is already under pressure from repeated expansion at HMP Stocken.

Residents can be assured that the Council will continue to scrutinise planning applications, submit evidence-based objections where needed and call for proper mitigation to protect the Village.

## **Highways, speed and safety**

Road safety remains a major concern for many residents, and it is an area where the Council intends to keep pressing hard.

- There is particular concern about speeding on Stocken Hall Road and through the parish more generally. Together with residents and HMP Stocken, your Council is actively pushing for a reduced speed limit on Stocken Hall Road on safety grounds, and will continue to lobby Rutland County Council, the police and the Police and Crime Commissioner on this.
- We are also keeping up pressure on issues such as the Stretton–Greetham cycle and footpath, and the impact of quarry traffic and other heavy vehicles on local lanes. These are not problems that can be solved overnight, but the Council is determined that Stretton will not slip quietly to the bottom of the list.

## **People, governance and capacity**

None of this work happens on its own.

I want to thank my fellow councillors – Councillor Allan and Councillor Stokes – for their hard work and commitment over the past year. Each has taken on significant responsibilities to keep the Council functioning effectively despite us being under strength, but in particular Councillor Stokes. John has served extensively as our Temporary Acting Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, his commitment on the finances, Audit and AGAR processes, the preparation of policies and the day-to-day administration has been vital in getting us to where we are today. The progress and savings I have described simply would not have been possible without that level of commitment.

I also want to thank all our volunteers: the defibrillator guardians, the community litter pickers, those who help with communications and those who support events and projects throughout the year. Their efforts are noticed and appreciated.

However, the reality is that three councillors is not enough for a parish with this level of challenge. We still have vacancies on the Council, and we really do hope more people will step forward. Over the past year, several new residents have joined the village, and it would be wonderful to see some of that new energy and fresh thinking reflected around our table. If you care about how Stretton looks and feels, please consider standing as a councillor or volunteering in some other way.

## **Clerk recruitment and looking ahead**

Looking to the future, one of our key priorities is to strengthen the Council's capacity.

- We are currently advertising for a permanent Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. Securing the right person in this role will give the Council the professional support it needs to keep on top of governance, finance, planning and communication, and to free councillors to focus more on strategy and community engagement.
- We will continue to embed good policies and procedures so that the Council is accountable, runs lawfully, efficiently, transparently and with integrity.
- We will keep a tight rein on the precept, balancing the need to protect residents during a cost-of-living squeeze with the need to invest selectively where spending genuinely benefits the Parish.
- We intend to keep working towards practical community projects – such as improved leisure or play-space, better walking and cycling links, and continued improvements in communication through the website and other channels – so that residents can see and feel the benefits of an active parish council.

## **Closing**

To close, this has been a demanding but productive year. The Council has stabilised, tightened its finances, strengthened relationships – especially with HMP Stocken – and begun to tackle both long-standing problems and new threats in a more structured way.

There is still a lot to do. Planning pressures, quarry activity, traffic, infrastructure and climate-related flooding will continue to pose challenges. But your Parish Council is now in a far better position to respond, to speak up for Stretton, and to work with partners on practical solutions.

Thank you all for your continued support and thank you once again to everyone who plays a part – large or small – in village life.

I now welcome your questions, comments and ideas about how you would like to see life in Stretton move forward over the year ahead.

## **ANNEX B**

### **Formal Complaint to Stretton Parish Council**

#### **Re: Access to Stretton Church, Conduct of Church Representatives, and Failure of Pastoral and Ecclesiastical Duty**

Dear Members of the Parish Council,

We write to formally raise a serious complaint concerning the continued denial of access to the parish church in Stretton, the conduct of individuals involved in its control, and the failure of both local and diocesan church leadership to uphold their duties in law, in practice, and in Christian witness. This matter has been raised repeatedly through appropriate ecclesiastical channels and remains unresolved.

#### **1. The Core Issue: Restriction of a Consecrated Church**

At its heart, this is not a complex matter.

The parish church is a consecrated building, set apart for the worship of Almighty God. Its primary purpose is not discretionary.

Under **Canon B 11**, it is clear that:

- Churches are to be used for divine service, prayer, and worship
- They are to be available to the parish for those purposes

Further, **Canon F 15** makes clear that:

- A church is not to be used for purposes inconsistent with its consecration

The current position in Stretton is plainly at odds with these principles.

We have been:

- Denied keys
- Denied reasonable access
- Subjected to conditions not applied to others

Meanwhile, a secular “hub”:

- Holds keys
- Exercises de facto control
- Uses the building extensively for non-worship purposes

This represents not simply an imbalance, but a reversal of the proper and intended order.

#### **2. Secular Control Over a Sacred Space**

While community use of church buildings is historically accepted, it must remain secondary and subordinate to worship.

The present situation demonstrates:

- Secular activity being prioritised
- Worshippers being restricted
- Access decisions influenced by non-ecclesiastical interests

This raises serious concerns regarding compliance with the **Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991**, which exists to ensure that consecrated buildings are preserved and used appropriately.

A church must not become:

- A controlled community asset
- A selectively accessible venue
- A space where worship is conditional

### 3. Conduct Toward a Vulnerable Individual

The treatment of [REDACTED] represents a grave and deeply concerning failure not only of conduct, but of basic Christian duty and pastoral care.

While:

- Recovering from a broken hip
- In a visibly distressed and vulnerable state

She attended the church seeking nothing more than quiet prayer.

What she experienced instead involved conduct by **members of the secular hub operating within the church**, and went far beyond insensitivity. It amounted to behaviour that can only reasonably be described as **intimidating, degrading, and wholly inappropriate within a place of worship**.

This included:

- Being **sworn at**
- Being **interrupted during prayer**
- Being **shouted at for lighting a candle**
- Being **told to “hurry up” while attempting to pray**
- Being told that there were “**other churches she could use**”, effectively excluding her from her own parish church
- Being monitored and followed in a manner that was plainly unsettling

This behaviour left her visibly distressed and in tears.

It is difficult to overstate the seriousness of this. A consecrated church should be a place of refuge, peace, and dignity—particularly for those who are unwell or vulnerable. Instead, it became a place where she felt unwelcome, pressured, and humiliated.

Such conduct is entirely incompatible with:

- Christian teaching
- Any reasonable standard of pastoral care

- Basic human decency

#### **4. Pattern of Exclusion and Wider Concern**

The issues identified are not isolated:

- Consistent refusal of unsupervised access
- Fabricated allegations (e.g. false claims regarding key copying)
- Selective exclusion within the village
- Hostile communications from individuals connected to the hub
- Overlap between PCC members and hub leadership

This overlap creates a clear and troubling conflict of interest, undermining impartial governance of the church.

We would also respectfully note that, through conversations within the village, similar concerns have been expressed by others. There is a wider perception that access to the church is limited and that it is not as open for personal prayer as many would reasonably expect. Several individuals have indicated support for the principle that the church should be more readily accessible for worship.

#### **5. Failure of Ecclesiastical Leadership**

Despite escalation to:

- The Archdeacon
- The Diocesan Safeguarding Team
- The Bishop's Office

There has been:

- Delay
- Reclassification
- Deflection

No meaningful resolution has been implemented.

Assurances given—specifically regarding:

- Access to the church
- Addressing inappropriate behaviour

have not been fulfilled.

This constitutes a failure not only of administration, but of spiritual leadership and ecclesiastical duty.

#### **6. Lack of Effective Support**

Despite engaging fully with the appropriate Church of England processes and escalating these concerns in good faith, we have, in practical terms, received no effective support or resolution.

While responses have been received, they have largely:

- Reclassified the issue

- Redirected us to alternative processes
- Offered assurances without subsequent action

At no stage has there been:

- A clear intervention at parish level
- Restoration of access
- Effective addressing of the conduct described

The outcome is that, notwithstanding engagement with diocesan structures, the situation remains unchanged.

## **7. Biblical and Theological Context**

The situation is not merely administrative—it is spiritual in nature.

Scripture is unambiguous regarding the nature of God's house:

"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."

— Isaiah 56:7

"Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves."

— Mark 11:17

"Woe unto you... for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

— Matthew 23:13

"For there is no respect of persons with God."

— Romans 2:11

## **8. The Wider Principle**

A parish church must be:

- Open
- Accessible
- Spiritually governed
- Free from undue secular control

It must not become:

- A restricted venue
- A socially controlled space
- A place where prayer is conditional

## **9. Impact**

The consequences have been significant:

- Emotional distress
- Loss of trust in church leadership
- Exclusion from local worship
- The need to seek spiritual support elsewhere

## **10. Requested Action**

We respectfully request that the Parish Council:

1. Review access arrangements and governance of the church
2. Ensure compliance with relevant canon law and ecclesiastical measures
3. Restore the priority of worship and prayer
4. Address conduct of individuals involved, including those connected to the secular hub
5. Examine potential conflicts of interest between PCC and external groups
6. Confirm that the church is open and accessible to all parishioners for prayer

## **Conclusion**

This began with a simple request: to enter a church and pray.

That such a request has been obstructed, escalated, and accompanied by behaviour of the kind described above is deeply concerning.

A church must remain what it is consecrated to be:

**A house of prayer, open to all, governed by faith—not by control, convenience, or secular priority.**

We trust that this matter will now be considered with the seriousness it warrants.

Yours faithfully,  
**[STRETTON RESIDENT]**

## **ANNEX C**

### **Message from The Hub Chair:**

Dear Stretton Parish Councillors,

Firstly, thank you for sharing the draft agenda for the Annual Parish Meeting on the 6th May 2026.

I appreciate the invitation to attend and provide an update on The Hub's activities and support for the Stretton and Stocken community, however, the Hub Committee has recently circulated its newsletter to all households in the community, outlining the activities we will be running going forward in 2026 as well as highlights from the past year.

You will also note that we have recently launched our new website: <https://strettonhub.co.uk/>, which provides a wide range of information about The Hub.

In addition to the above lines of communication/updates between the Hub and the community we will shortly be delivering a booklet to all households within the community, detailing the development and history of The Hub, together with information on fundraising for the Friends of St Nicholas' fund for the fabric of the St. Nicholas Church, Stretton.

I hope the meeting goes well.

Kind regards,

Shani

Chair, The Hub Committee

## **ANNEX D**

### **Update from Church Warden and Benefice Office**

#### **CHURCH WARDEN:**

Hi John.

Thanks for the invitation to attend the Annual Parish Meeting.

Unfortunately I am unable to attend.

Full details of all church activities within the Benefice can be found on the Benefice website, [www.northrutlandchurches.org.uk](http://www.northrutlandchurches.org.uk)

I hope the meeting goes well.

Jonathan.

#### **BENEFICE OFFICE:**

Many thanks John for your kind invitation.

Unfortunately there is no-one available for that date and time.

We hope the meeting is a success and the village is encouraged.

Kind regards,

Office Team

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